

BABER HOUSE ( CLINIC HOSPITAL)  
MACON, GEORGIA

HABS NO. GA-190

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
DISTRICT OF GEORGIA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
HAROLD BUSH-BROWN, DISTRICT OFFICER  
GEORGIA SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

## BABER HOUSE

Macon, Bibb County, Georgia

Walnut Street

Owner: Clinic Hospital.

Date of Erection: 1829 - 30.

Architect - Builder: Dr. Baber designed the house. Builder unknown; may have been Freeman.

Present Condition: Good. Original horse - shoe steps in front with wrought iron balustrade have been removed. Only that portion of interior circular stairway between first and second floor has been removed.

Altered for hospital purposes in 1920 s.

Number of Stories: Two stories over high basement. Facos south.

Materials of Construction: Foundation brick. Floors wood. Exterior walls brick stuccoed and scored to represent stone. Interior walls frame and plaster.

Other Existing Records: Bronze tablet on facade by United Daughters of the Confederacy. Original photographs and sketch of grounds in possession of the Misses Baber-Blackshear. Article in Macon paper.

Additional Data: Interior and exterior cornice details interesting.

Built by Dr. Ambrose Baber for his residence 1829 with doctor's office in yard and occupied by him until 1841. Bought by John B. Lamar and inherited by his sister, Mrs. Howell Cobb. Occupied by Gen. Howell Cobb and his family in 1864-65. Mrs. Hopson bought place in late sixties or early seventies. His daughter, Mrs. Rowland Ellis of Macon, Georgia made a sketch of the grounds. Front of property enclosed by fine old cast iron fence extending to corner of Second and Walnut Streets now removed, but some portion of it has been made use of at corners of building as it now stands.

Mr. Elliott Dunwoody of Macon, the architect for the alterations

when this building was converted into a hospital, says the cornice is 12-  
untouched and the principle change on the front facade is the stoop which  
is new.

The folowing information is taken from the letters written by the  
Misses Baber-Blackshear:

Lumber bought early in 1829 and seasoned many months. The house was  
ready for occupancy the latter part of 1829 but not completed until January  
1830. No nails used in the whole structure, timbers, beams, etc., were all  
put together with hand made pins. The work was done by the slaves.

The kitchen had an enormous open fireplace with large heavy swinging  
crane on which pots and kettles were hung and there was an immense brick  
oven for baking. The basement paved with stone consisted of four very  
large rooms, wide hall open in rear, a wine cellar under the front end of  
hall and under front porch. There was no back piazza downstairs - the  
basement opened upon a paved area. The family still possess a collection  
of iron and copper kettles and pots, skillets and boilers used in the old  
kitchen. The copper ones have Dr. Baber's initials "AB" cut or sunk into  
them.

There was only a small rear stoop off first floor with high steps lead-  
ing from basement. No inside back stair from basement to upper floor at all.

The lower floor walls were draped in velvet. The circular stairway  
from first floor to the roof with large skylight at the top had bannisters  
of solid mahogany as were the mantels and possibly the door and window frames.  
The mahogany was brought from Philadelphia. The steps of the stair were  
curiously dangerous being exceedingly narrow at end nearest balustrade and  
wide at end next to walls. A portion of stair to the roof and skylight and  
some door and window frames are left.

There were four large rooms downstairs with wide hall - the same up-

stairs. The ceiling was very high so in converting into hospital (the ceiling of new portion being lower) the difference was taken care of upstairs by steps in the hall. The second room on the right beyond the columns in hall was the library and had shelves on all sides from floor to ceiling enclosed by glass doors.

The wall at the right of the back door is rounded into a curve, not squared as is the wall opposite beside the stairway.

The smaller door (half open) at the right of end back door opens into a coat closet cut into the wall and measures the depth of the wall, ( I think at least 19 or 20 inches wide). The curved baseboard beside wall at stairway (left side) does not show in the photo as clearly as it does in the one of the second story. The dining <sup>room</sup> was the second room on the left beyond the double columns of archway. The front room on the right was the parlor and had no connecting door to adjoining room. The front room on the left was the sitting room and had a connecting door with the adjoining room (the dining room).

Upstairs the front end of the hall was a large dressing room, the walls lined with shelves from about three feet from floor to the ceiling, Beneath these shelves were cupboard apartments with doors containing shelves and spaces for trunks and boxes.

Window to dressing room smaller than others of second story. The size of this dressing room was about the same as that of the wine cellar in basement and under front stoop and was directly beneath locality of the dressing room. The door frames and window frames also doors and windows were alike all over house and very large and massive. There were two family bedrooms, a guest room and a nursery on second floor. The two rooms at right had a connecting door; the two on left had none.

The grounds were taken by Dr. and Mrs. Baber with the undulations that nature had made and they divided them into unusual and unique terraces not

found elsewhere in Macon in any garden. These terraces, they cultivated, developed and added to nature's beauty with unsurpassed art and skill using almost every kind of flora, etc., they could obtain. Dr. Baber introduced the Chinese Magnolia to Macon and also the English Ivy, both of which now abound all over the city and Rose Hill Cemetery.

A very tall and wide brick wall ten feet high and eighteen or nineteen inches wide enclose the grounds. This wall was completely concealed from ground to top with gorgeous English Ivy which after climbing to top, fell in magnificent fringe of green back to the earth. The top of the wall was thickly studded with broken glass. The wall extended a short distance on the 2nd Street Side then it tapered lower. Beginning at Second Street side and extending across the front of grounds the wall was lower still and topped by solid grey granite and a most beautiful wrought iron fence ending at each front corner of the house in a graceful outward curve.

The front and porch steps were of immense granite slabs as were the fence copings.

This home property of Dr. and Mrs. Baber was on the (then) outskirts of the city - the largest and handsomest house in the city. The grounds and street's beauty have all been ruined by the so-called growth of progress.

The iron fence copings and steps at two side gates were immense grey granite slabs. There were no gates at front of house. One on the right, opening into the brick area way, and one opening to path leading to Dr. Baber's offices; the path bordered with pansies. A short flight of 3 to 4 steps led up to gate from sidewalk and another flight with several more steps led downward into yard being a good deal lower than the sidewalk.

The front stoop steps (horse shoe shape) had fine wrought iron banisters as did the stoop, and led directly on to the sidewalk. The stoop had an open work grating or grille, through which could be seen the beautiful white statue of Diana of the Chase.

The back porch (or stoop) off first floor had a flight of steps at each end which led down to the brick area surrounding the house. It was only slightly larger than front porch. The areas had a slight slope toward back of grounds to allow drainage. There were small outlet openings for drainage under the very low wall which was topped by tiny ornamental iron fence low enough for a man to step over the wall and fence. At right corner of this fence and wall were 3 little steps for ladies and children to match path on other side. A gate topped the wall at the top step. At left of back steps was the creamery and milk house of grey stone consisting of two rooms (inclosed). Between the 2 rooms was the well which was not inclosed. A roof covered the entire creamery and milk house, also the well.

The left side of grounds are a series of terraces. Boxwood borders the path. Cedar and magnolia trees are on two sides of the plot. The inclosure surrounded by low brick walls topped with stone coping and delicate lacy iron fence. Several steps lead down to a lower terrace from the plot of Kentucky Blue Grass. On this terrace, also, terrace on opposite side of grounds were large life sized Greek Statues (white marble).

At back of house a path ran down entire center of grounds. At lower corners between the two grass plots each plot having low wall and coping topped with dainty lacy iron fencing, was a gate and short flight of steps leading to part of the path which was wider. On each side of wide path were rows of jonquils and rows of elm trees.

The square opening in the right rear corner of the grounds was entrance for vehicles, horses, etc., from both alleys. The left rear part of the grounds, was lower still. The 3 wild olive and mimosa trees were covered wonderfully with English Ivy and 7 Sisters Roses.

The short flight of steps seen in picture at edge of sidewalk are modern; placed by City when the street was altered in 1900 and lower steps

of sidewalk filled in. A glimpse of the old original wall and right side near gate shows underneath granite coping.

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Harold Bush-Brown

HAROLD BUSH-BROWN  
DISTRICT OFFICER-HABS

Feb 10, 1937

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